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IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AN ESSAY WRITTEN IN COMPETITION
FOR A PRIZE

BY

MARY H. LEONARD

SOMETIME INSTRUCTOR IN THE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL
AT BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

BOSTON, U.S.A.,
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MORAL TRAINING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Among national manufactures the making of souls of a good quality," to use a phrase borrowed from Ruskin, stands preëminent. Whether the ultimate end of education be the harmonious development and perfection of the individual, as declared by Kant, or the preparation of the individual for social efficiency, as maintained by many modern philosophers, it is equally true that the securing of moral results is the highest and most complete function of the school. On this point there is no dissent among intelligent and right-minded people.

The school is not the only, nor indeed the primary, agency for this end. To parents first of all, and to the church as well, is intrusted the great task of teaching children to understand and perform their moral obligations. Yet while neither the family nor the church has a right to neglect this task, the action of these agencies will always be incomplete. Multitudes of American children have no pure home environment, and are also outside the influence of church training. The school, moreover, has opportunities which are not given to the church. The poor, the immigrant population, as well as the great middle class of working people, though often holding aloof from the churches, almost always believe in education, and desire its advantages for their children. For the sake of its own stability and safety as well as

for the good of its citizens at large, the government must secure to every child that moral training which is absolutely essential to the preparation for good citizenship. Every argument that can be adduced for the establishment of public schools at all, requires that these schools should seek to furnish an ethical training of the highest type as their most legitimate and crowning end.

But while the general aim is so plain, the method to be used in this vital process of enduing future citizens with "souls of a good quality" is not so clear. American civic principles, which forbid the introduction into government schools of certain forms of moral and religious instruction sometimes used in the home and the Sunday school, seem to confuse the problem. There are also psychological elements that must be taken full account of in determining the methods to be employed.

Yet among the contradictions of argument there is one point of agreement among all the educators who have addressed themselves to the subject. *The moral teaching of the public schools, especially in the lower grades, must be very largely indirect and suggestive rather than formal or didactic.*

The reasons for this lie principally in the nature of the child. To human nature generally, but especially to child nature, example is better than precept, inspiration is more than instruction. A good school will surround a child with a moral atmosphere which he breathes unconsciously, and in which his moral faculties expand and blossom and finally ripen into noble fruitage.

The resources of the school which conduce to this end are of three general classes. First, there is the personality and personal influence of the teacher. A teacher of good breeding, good temper, and moral earnestness,

who understands and sympathizes with the pupil, becomes an ideal toward which the child unconsciously molds his own character. Multitudes of men and women have testified in later life to the influence of an inspiring teacher who first aroused in them a love of goodness and truth. Among all the means which a school can use to produce moral results, the personal influence of a noble teacher stands highest, and its value cannot be overestimated.

The orderly arrangement and general discipline of the school is also one of the chief sources of dependence for moral results. That the child gains his moral power through experience is a sound principle of educational philosophy. A well-ordered school cultivates in the pupil habits of obedience, cleanliness, order, punctuality, perseverance, self-reliance, self-respect, justice, and good will in dealing with one's fellows. The regular activities of the school ought to bring into play various right motives of action, and success in achieving school results will stir the soul to larger desires for right effort in the future.

The habit of orderly thinking, which is developed by right methods of study, is also an aid to moral development. The ability to think right is a vital element in learning to act right. Learning the facts of nature and of one's own being and the relations of these facts to one another is therefore a part of the great process of moral growth.

Each of the several studies has its own special possibilities in this direction. Mathematics may contribute to habits of exactness and so to truthfulness. Grammar stimulates the logical faculty and emphasizes the need of conformity of speech to thought. Manual arts

awaken thoughts of practical service. The study of animals should incline the heart to kindness. The various natural sciences not only lead the pupil to conform his life to natural laws, but if taught in the best way they will carry his thoughts beyond the mere facts of external nature to recognize a moral order pervading the universe, by which all forms of being are linked together, so that the soul finds itself in the presence of that Higher Power which is known by the name of God. There is such a thing as natural religion which the reverent study of nature awakens in the soul, and which is a powerful influence to moral action.

But even larger moral possibilities are to be found in the studies known as the humanities. History is full of examples and of warnings. Music, painting, and the study of all the fine arts, cultivate the sense of the beautiful which is closely akin to the sense of the good and true. Through literature, especially, truth is revealed in multiplied forms of beauty, inspiring the heart to right thoughts, deep feelings, and noble impulses.

It is true that all of these subjects may be, and often are, taught in such ways that they fail to add strength to the moral nature. They may even lend themselves to the stultifying of the moral impulses. Knowledge is a two-edged weapon. If the desires and purposes of the soul are evil or selfish, intellectual attainments will but intensify the moral perversity. Yet this does not alter the fact that the regular studies of the school curriculum afford an immense field for uplifting influences, and that through the channels of regular school work love of truth and goodness may be substituted for the sophisms of the undisciplined heart.

How far the regular school exercises will conduce to

moral growth, however, depends very much on the incentives that govern the schoolroom work. There are various incentives that may lead to correct conduct. All of these are proper to certain occasions, but they are not of equal moral value. Each of them, too, has both higher and lower phases of its exercise.

Lowest among the incentives which the school may employ is the fear of punishment. In a good school this will be used but sparingly, yet to take from a teacher the power to use this, when other means have failed, is to weaken the school authority and influence. Of a little higher grade among motives is the hope of reward, in the form of prizes, marks, grading, school honors, and the like. Both punishments and rewards are morally most effective if they are not arbitrarily decreed, but bear some relation to the action. Thus the natural penalty for carelessness is to remedy the damage which carelessness has caused. The best reward of fidelity is the conferring of some office of honor and trust for which fidelity gives preparation. One of the best rewards of school work is the approval of the teacher, the parents, and the fellow-students. In the words of another, "The making glad through deserved approval is the fine art of training."

The mere joy of active successful effort may be made an incentive to right action. To this may be added the approval of one's own conscience, the joy of duty done. But this, in turn, is closely allied to the love of right for its own sake, loyalty to an ideal of goodness, which is also akin to what theologians might call "love of God."

Other motives to right action spring from right feelings towards others, feelings of justice, generosity, pity, affection, and general good will. Love of the teacher,

of the parents, of the school itself, all of these may be appealed to as schoolroom incentives, leading to right conduct and moral growth. Schoolroom conditions, like those in general life, being more or less complex, more than one of these incentives will often be active in a given case. It should be the teacher's effort to see to it that the highest and best of the natural motives to which the child can respond is not omitted in the making of a moral choice.

In this whole matter of school incentives it is vitally necessary that the teacher's own conduct should be governed by the same high incentives that she would impress on the child as the controlling motives of action. If her chief motive in teaching is to draw a salary, if she is governed by caprice or partiality in her dealings with the pupils, if she sets aside the good of others to secure selfish ends, then it would be hopeless for her to expect to lead the children under her care to respond to higher motives than those which govern her own relation to them.

In such a steady pursuit of regular schoolroom work under right incentives as has here been outlined, the child should not only be led to perform right actions and acquire right habits of action; he should also gain a set of right ideals as to his own personal relations to the world, his duties and obligations to the school, his family, the town, the state, the nation, and to humanity as a whole. Through his school experience he should gain that sense of human brotherhood that will make him realize that all of us side by side are marching together down the way of life, and are bound to help one another as we go. The sense of his own private rights should not be lost sight of, but the recognition

that all others have similar rights that we must hold as sacred as our own should also be gained.

But the fact that indirect means are chiefly to be depended on for moral training in the public schools does not imply that no direct words are to be spoken on these vital matters, or that there is to be no conscious effort on the part of the teacher to bring these subjects to the pupil's attention. On the contrary, the earnest teacher will seek for opportunities to give definite impressions regarding the moral life. Occasions of discipline and other schoolroom happenings will be freely drawn upon for this end. A word in season, at the right psychological moment, must often be spoken. The thoughtful question, that brings the child's own reason to bear upon a point that his conscience can respond to, will often be needed in shaping ideals of moral conduct.

On the question of formal attempts at ethical instruction in the school course many high authorities may be quoted, who seem to take opposing sides. Thus Dr. G. Stanley Hall has written: —

"During the first years of school life a point of prime importance is the education of the conscience. A system of carefully arranged talks, with copious illustrations from history and literature, about such topics as fair play, slang, cronies, dress, teasing, getting mad, prompting in class, white lies, affectation, cleanliness, order, honor, taste, self-respect, treatment of animals, reading, vacation pursuits, etc., can be brought within the range of boy and girl interests by a sympathetic and practical teacher, and be made immediately and practically useful. All this is nothing more or less than conscience building."

Other thoughtful educators, however, have inveighed against giving formal moral instruction to young children, declaring it to be the part of wisdom to "trust to instinct alone, and when this goes astray recall it."

But the difference is more verbal than real. If by formal instruction is meant abstract perfunctory teaching, it is indeed to be avoided. Didactic attempts to teach morals in school are worse than useless, as children of all ages resent being "preached to." Unwise attempts to force abstract moral truth into children's minds are responsible for much of the defiance of moral restraint that is often manifested among young people. The difficulty and danger are not confined to the day school, but are often more conspicuously shown in the home and in Sunday school, where well-meaning parents and teachers who do not understand child nature feel it upon their consciences to administer advice and moral precepts in season and out of season, under the impression that they are giving moral training by this means. It is little wonder that, under the methods sometimes employed in Sunday schools, many boys leave these schools at the age when they are most in need of wholesome moral influence.

Yet it is a mistake to think that children are not interested in moral questions. On the contrary, there is scarcely anything that they are so much interested in. The moral lesson, however, must come to them in concrete rather than abstract form. Children delight in fables, in fairy stories having a moral significance, in stories of real life in which the good are rewarded and the bad fitly punished. The moral of the story need not be stated in words; the child is quick to seize upon the thought, and is seldom loth to express his own

moral conclusions on the subject. To the child's mind the characters of a story are usually distinctly good or distinctly bad. Thus in the Bible story of Sarah and Hagar, the latter would probably be thought of as the heroine and Sarah as the villain of the story. It requires a later stage of thinking and experience to realize that good and bad are mingled in complex action, and that the effects do not always bear immediate relation to the moral elements that lie beneath.

As children grow older, the age of adolescence brings new problems that lead to deeper thinking, and give greater need and opportunity for wise and direct moral teaching, which must still be carefully guarded, lest it become too prominent and insistent.

Boys and girls have practical questions to meet regarding control of temper, temperance, dress, etiquette and social customs, superstitions, fear and cowardice, courage, honor in school life, independence, courtesy, benevolence, the use of money, friendships, purity, health, the life of feeling, and work. On all of these subjects right moral standards must be formed, and this cannot be wholly left to chance or incidental opportunity.

Public holidays in honor of great men or great events give occasion for instruction in civic duties. The inculcation of patriotism is a distinct aid to morality. The economic and business relations of the world must have attention. The utilitarian element is not to be ignored. Young people must learn the real meaning of work; that the labor which is so often dreaded or avoided is but the natural and necessary exchange of service among members of the community, and that every honorable person will in some form or other contribute his share.

The ethical principles underlying business must be looked at in a practical way. It is related of Abraham Lincoln as a young man that once when traveling in the West he applied to a friend for a loan to enable him to reach a certain destination. The friend reminded him that at that moment he had upon his person various sums of money tied in handkerchiefs or other homely receptacles. "Yes," said Lincoln, "but these are trust sums and not to be borrowed from." A story like this may serve as the text for a discussion by which a boy gains an impression of the sacredness of a trust, which in an hour of later temptation may save him from the crime of embezzlement.

By some definiteness of plan in such work a school avoids the danger of inadvertent omission. The superintendent of a large reformatory, Dr. James A. Leonard, of Mansfield, Ohio, in a recent address before a body of teachers, referred to some of the omissions in practical moral training that make it easy for boys to enter the criminal classes through ignorance of the real nature of certain legal crimes. He cited the case of a boy who, finding himself penniless and hungry, entered a freight car and helped himself from a store of biscuit, not knowing that the breaking of the insecure seal on the door of the car changed what seemed to him a petty theft into the crime of burglary. He told of another who, more in thoughtlessness than with criminal intent, copied a man's signature and was afterwards embittered that an act which had not finally defrauded any one should cause a commitment for forgery. The boy had never fully understood the reasons why a man's signature must be held most sacred before the law.

One of the best ways to make moral teaching both

direct and concrete is by the study of biography. The Hartford *Seminary* for November, 1905, has an article on "Lincoln — A Study in Ethics," and it is well pointed out that such a discriminating study of this typical American has a high pedagogical value as a suggestion of methods. After the study of an interesting life the question, "Why do you admire, or not admire, this man or woman?" brings to the front the pupil's own life ideals. Much more can be done in this way than has usually been attempted in schools.

Another way of consciously aiding moral development is by the cultivation of a good reading habit. It was the testimony of the superintendent of the reformatory above quoted, that while most of the boys sent to his care as criminals could read, and many of them were voracious readers, not one could be said to have developed a taste for good reading. Scarcely one would of his own accord read a book of history, travel, or legitimate adventure. Their taste for books had been fed on less wholesome mental food. It is the privilege of the school through its own library and by friendly coöperation with the public library to arouse the interest of boys and girls in books that will touch the right springs of moral action.

The trend of recent educational thinking is strongly toward increasing the emphasis in schools upon the spiritual or moral side of life. One evidence of this is seen in the large number of new books intended to aid teachers in bringing moral truths before the minds of young people. Many series of outline lessons have also been prepared suggesting the material for moral instruction adapted to different grades. At the Paris Exposition of 1900, the French Government received an

important prize for such a "System of Moral Instruction" prepared for French schools.

On the other hand, some educators oppose such outlines as tending to mar the moral nature of children through perfunctory teaching. The dangers of text-book ethics for young children can scarcely be overestimated; yet that such books and outlines are sometimes helpful to teachers of skill and experience is beyond question. The fault is not with the book or outline but with the way it is used. It may be said that a teacher who can use such a book or outline skillfully would probably do something effective in this line without such aid. But this is not an argument for suppressing the helpful book. The danger should be guarded against in some other way, and teachers who know how to use them should be provided with all the aids that can be furnished in their difficult and important work.

It seems desirable that the relation of a school board toward the methods of moral instruction in the schools should be advisory rather than mandatory. It is the part of the board to secure teachers who are fitted to give moral training, to make the teachers understand that this is expected of them, to supply them with such aids as they can skillfully use in this work, but to leave them for the most part free to work out the problem according to their own best judgment. Good work in this line should be recognized, and cautions given to those teachers whose lack of discernment regarding delicate questions may lead them astray in such matters. But for the most part the question of method should rest with the teachers, and it is largely a question of the teacher's own temperament how far formal

instruction can be added to the informal to produce effective results.

At the meeting of the Religious Education Association in Boston, in 1905, Mr. George H. Martin, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, read an interesting series of papers written by children in the Boston grammar schools on children's duties toward parents, brothers and sisters, old people, etc. Some of these papers, written by children of foreign parents at the North End of Boston, seemed to show conclusively that American public schools, in spite of their alleged defects, are creating ideals of moral conduct in the minds of these young "Americans in the making" which argue well for the nation's future. The ethical results of school work shown by these papers were mostly achieved by indirect means; yet the very act of writing the papers was in itself a formal school exercise in moral training.

There are very many ways in which a tactful teacher may mingle with indirect training some instruction of a more formal character so as to violate neither good psychological principles nor the civic principles of the American school; and the view of the best modern educators is that while indirect moral influence is to be chiefly depended on, it is desirable that it should be supplemented by some moral teaching of a more definite and conscious character.

But the chief interest in this subject does not relate to the teaching of mere ethics by either indirect or direct methods. The real animus of the public discussion concerns the relations of moral and religious education in the training of children.

Is there a distinct line between secular and religious truth? Can morality be separated from religion? Even if this may be done in abstract thought, is it possible in effective moral instruction? Have not the moral instincts a deep religious basis? And can we afford to have the morality taught in American schools less strong and deep than the very best? Even if some elements of moral conduct can be taught without entering the domain of religion, do not faith, hope, and charity, the things that abide, have a deeper foundation? And can these be omitted from the training given in American schools?

Turning to the subjective side of the question, can any part of the child's nature be omitted in a course of training? Will not his religious nature of necessity be profoundly influenced by the school course either for good or evil? These are some of the many questions that need definite answer.

On the other hand, is it possible to introduce any religious elements into the public school without violating a fundamental American principle? The doctrine of the complete separation of Church from State has been one of the ruling ideas of the nation for several generations. The belief has gained large acceptance that since we have no state religion, nothing of religion has any place in the national policy. Certainly to the American mind there can be no partnership between politics and any particular form of religion. Unless there are some elements of religion that are wholly distinct from sectarianism, and that are also needed to give the highest sanction to morality, religion can have no place in the public-school curriculum.

The range of thought suggested by these questions is

very wide. In the discussions that have been aroused it has sometimes seemed as if the moral training of the schools would be crushed between the upper and nether millstones of secularization and ecclesiasticism. Teachers have sometimes felt a modesty — a false modesty, it might be said — in ever uttering a religious sentiment in the school unless in the form of a quotation; and under the pressure of public opinion to prevent any proselyting tendency of the schools, it is to be feared that many teachers have found positions in the public-school service who by reason of lack of moral and religious earnestness are utterly unfitted to be intrusted with the training of children.

The questions at issue are not confined to the public schools, however, but belong in some degree to the college as well. Most of the important colleges profess to be unsectarian in their courses of instruction. There is no difference in the American principle as related to the public schools and the state colleges, except as dissimilarity between child nature and that of the adult may make some difference in the manner of its application.

It is also true that no hard and fast line can be drawn between schools and other governmental institutions which cannot, and do not, ignore the fact that religion is natural to the life of man in the world. A government that issues proclamations for days of public Thanksgiving, and appoints chaplains for army and navy and halls of Congress, need not administer its public schools on any plan that would seem to imply atheism as the general religious attitude of the community.

Nor are the difficulties in the application of the American principle found in the teaching of morals

alone. In the teaching of history it is hard to be impartial in the treatment of the Reformation and many other eras and events. In the field of politics there are similar dangers. The teaching of American history, especially the era of the Civil War, calls for a broad and fair-minded treatment, in which simple facts cannot be evaded but may be left to make their own impression without the attitude of partisanship on the part of the teacher.

Nor are the difficulties that relate to religion in the schools confined to America. The controversies in England regarding recent Education Acts show that the subject has momentous and peculiar difficulties where there is an established church.

In the German school system religious instruction is a part of every school programme, the form of religion taught being Lutheran or Catholic, or some other, according to that of the plurality of the population. But the Jewess who advertised in Berlin that she could teach any religion that might be desired is not exactly the type of teacher that is needed for American schools. A system in which pupils "take religion" as any other study suggests to a religious mind the remark of the theologian who said that "the German people must have a great deal of religion since religious instruction in the schools has not succeeded in rooting it all out."

The Irish or "compound" system of religious instruction in schools sets apart a certain time each week in which all the children are taught religion by religious teachers of their respective faiths. Some have advocated this plan for American schools. From various quarters recently has been heard the plea, "Give us

Wednesday afternoon that we may teach religion to the children."

There can be no objection to reducing the school periods if the public desire this, and parents and churches are not hindered from using out-of-school time for such religious teaching as they wish. Yet according to our national principles it is only as a basis of moral character that religious instruction has any place in public schools, and so far as it is needed to secure the moral character which is essential to good citizenship, it is needed by all alike.

The problem in America is a different one from that of any European country and must be judged on our own national basis. Some knowledge of the history of American schools is needed to understand fully the problem to be met. It will be seen that in this history the specific question of the use of the Bible in schools has figured conspicuously. This is by no means the main element in the problem, but it is the one that has aroused most controversy, and it must be taken account of in any conclusions that are reached regarding proper methods of moral instruction in public schools.

A leading motive of the New England colonists in founding their early schools was that the children might be able to read the Word of God, and that their churches might have an educated ministry. Church and State were not at that time separate, and the Bible was the chief text-book of the schools. After the exile of Roger Williams from Massachusetts, the colony of Rhode Island was founded on the principle of separation of Church and State; but the idea had not yet dawned that the use of the Bible in schools could be considered sectarian.

About 1836 a wave of public-school interest swept over America. The school system of Germany was closely studied, schools were graded, school attendance was made compulsory, and normal schools were established. But in one respect the Prussian system had to be modified to suit American needs. The plan for religious instruction could not be followed. Yet in Massachusetts and in other states, legal requirement was made for the daily reading of the Bible "without note or comment."

Later came the tide of immigration, and religious sects were rapidly multiplied. Catholics soon began to protest against the religious exercises held in the schools. The difference in the versions of the Bible used by Protestants and Catholics added a new element to the controversy. Then came the cry, "No Bible in the schools." In some states and cities the reading of the Bible was forbidden by law, and in various localities legal proceedings were instituted to test the legality of such prohibition. In 1870, at the close of the celebrated case of Citizens of Cincinnati against the School Board of the city, a large book was published containing the arguments on both sides that had been presented to the court. Everywhere the effort was made to rid the schools of all observances that could by any possibility be considered sectarian, and religious exercises, if still continued, were reduced in most instances to a brief formality.

Later came the criticism that the secularized schools were ineffective agents for the vital work of moral instruction. It was declared that religion is a fundamental part of the education of any child; and Catholics began to ask first for a division of the school funds, and,

failing in this, to establish parochial schools, and to urge all loyal Catholics to withdraw their children from the "godless" public schools and send them to schools where they would be duly instructed in the Catholic faith.

Within a very few years the point of discussion has again shifted. Many Protestants as well as Catholics have been urging that the work of secularizing the schools has gone too far, and that recent glaring corruptions in the social and business world show that the public schools are failing to give adequate moral instruction. From some quarters the demand is heard that the Bible be reinstated in the schools as a needful means to public morality.

Other voices are also heard in this discussion. Educators and psychologists are declaring that "the whole boy goes to school," and that it is impossible to separate his religious nature from his other powers in matters of school training. Teachers of ethics and religion also are saying that the two departments of thought are closely interwoven, and that they cannot be divided from each other in instruction or in life if the best ideals of either are to be preserved. The Golden Rule belongs to religion and to ethics as well. It is not sectarian, and the teaching of it violates no American principle.

In 1903 there was organized at Chicago, under the leadership of the late lamented President William R. Harper, a National Religious Education Association, which announced as its purpose "to inspire all educational agencies with the religious ideal, and all religious agencies with the educational ideal." The trend of public thought is distinctly toward a more ethical conception

of religion, as well as a more religious conception of ethics as a vital power in human life.

The idea is growing that the line between secular and religious interests is not so distinct as some would have us believe. Philosophers and theologians are trying to formulate anew the definition of religion. Religion is not theology, they tell us. It is a life to be lived. Its seat is in the heart rather than in the intellect. If the religious life is lived in the schools, the religious nature of the children will be developed. This need not tend toward proselytism. On the contrary, children of all sects should, under this influence, become more earnest and more loyal to their particular faiths, while at the same time more tolerant toward persons of other faiths. The school should be a unifying influence in the community in politics and social customs, and in religion also.

But while all would agree that the religious spirit is more important than religious belief, some would ask, "Must not the religious life be nourished by having the truths of religion presented to the mind?" Otherwise, where were the good of preaching, of Sunday schools, of religious reading, or any other agencies for religious instruction? Are any truths of religion admissible to the schools in order that the spirit of religion may be nourished and the highest morality secured? Students of comparative religion ask, "Are there any common elements which enter all religions?" And men and women who wish to strengthen the schools on the spiritual side are seeking to find those universal elements of religion that can be admitted into school life without danger of sectarianism.

Thus far in American school history much of the con-

troversy in regard to religion in schools has been between Catholics and Protestants. At the meeting of the Religious Education Association in Boston, in 1905, the Very Rev. Thomas J. Shahan, D.D., of the Catholic University at Washington, gave an address on "How far Catholics and Protestants are able to coöperate in Religious Teaching," in which he said, "We can teach . . . the common traditional doctrines concerning God, the soul, the moral law, sin, moral responsibility, prayer, divine providence, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the traditional character of the Scriptures." To this many social duties were also added.

Professor Shahan did not by any means intend to imply that all these things can be taught in the public schools, and it is at once evident that this list of religious tenets given by a distinguished Catholic prelate as common to the two great classes of Christian religionists in America, includes far more than is legitimate to public-school instruction. The teacher in a New York school who a short time ago prefaced a Bible quotation with the words "As Jesus said" was criticised by Jewish citizens on the ground that she had tried to lend authority to a moral truth, itself undeniable, by reason of peculiar or divine authority vested in Jesus. Mistakes on the part of teachers will sometimes occur; but teachers of the present generation are pretty thoroughly grounded in the American principle which forbids sectarianism in the schools. It would certainly be hard to prove that such mistakes on the part of teachers are either more frequent or more harmful than the various mistakes that are made by other government officials in all the branches of public service.

But while there are limitations to the introduction of

religious ideas into public schools, a cursory glance at Professor Shahan's list will reveal some ideas that are common not only to Catholics and Protestants, but to the Jewish religion and Oriental faiths as well; nay, that are so ingrained in the thoughts of universal humanity as to find recognition wherever earnest minds deal seriously with the facts of human existence.

It is impossible, for instance, that the idea of God should be banished from human thought either within or without the schoolroom. The idea of God is easy to the child. Literature is filled with it. The whole community is pervaded by it. It is in the air we breathe. If free-thinkers and atheists would prevent their children from hearing the name of God, they must withdraw them from civilization to live a hermit life. But there is no reason to believe that intelligent people, however agnostic in their own beliefs, do wish such an impossible condition. Disbelief is not claiming this as one of the "rights of conscience." Agnostics as a class mean to be reasonable beings, and even to the avowed atheist the general idea that men call God is the highest symbol of moral goodness.

It is not the province of the public school to try to define God, a task which neither philosophers nor theologians have ever really accomplished. But new conceptions of God in modern thought are making it increasingly difficult to exclude the God-idea from the natural life of a well-ordered school; and to ask teachers to evade or to bar out from the schoolroom the name or the thought of God would be laying a restriction upon the school that is not felt in any other department of the national life.

Perhaps no formulated list of the religious ideas that

are admissible in the public schools could ever be agreed upon. Nor does this seem to be necessary for the correct application of the principle. The religious conditions of schools and localities differ greatly. In any given community it is not usually difficult to see what religious elements are universal to the time and place. The teacher of a small school in an intelligent community of homogeneous faith may properly act with more freedom than is permissible in some other situations.

On the other hand, the conditions of a large city school may exclude some observances that are theoretically desirable, lest the religious prejudices of ignorant people be needlessly aroused. Even weak consciences have their rights. But some liberty of interpretation of the American principle should be allowed so long as no rights of conscience are thereby invaded. The largest amount of religious teaching that would be morally helpful to the schools and at the same time entirely compatible with American principles is surely to be desired. Anything more than this ought as surely to be condemned.

The element of the problem that is most of all the subject of controversy is the relation of the Bible to American schools. Recent critical and historical study of the Bible has changed the field of discussion and introduced new elements into the question. Yet this very Bible study, aided by experience, will help to clear away the fogs of the educational atmosphere. The *Biblical World* for January, 1906, contains an interesting symposium from college professors regarding the Bible in schools. Other writings on this subject have been

recently published, and some of the views that are wide-spread in the community may be summarized as follows: —

1. The Bible must be studied in the schools, but only in an academic way. It contains many of the most important writings in existence relating to history, literature, and good morals. These cannot properly be excluded from a course in education. There is no reason except prejudice why any one would seek to exclude them. A study of the Bible that is purely objective and scientific is a necessary part of a school course, but its introduction for any other ends would be sectarian and improper.

2. The Bible must not be studied at all in American schools. It is primarily a book of *religion*. To teach it academically and not religiously would weaken its influence for its own truest ends. Since its religious use is forbidden by civic principles, its study from a literary standpoint must also be excluded, lest it should lose its power as a book of religious doctrine and faith.

3. Although the Bible cannot be used in the public schools as a book of *instruction* for either religious or academic purposes, certain parts of the Bible can be used with a purely devotional intent. The cultivation of the religious emotions and impulses by means of devotional writings will have an elevating effect on children; and wherever these can be introduced in an unsectarian spirit and without arousing prejudice or suspicion in the community, it is a very desirable school practice, and entirely unobjectionable from a national standpoint.

4. It is conceivable that under ideal conditions there might be some use of the Bible in schools, both for instruction and devotion, that would be unobjectionable and also very helpful as an aid to moral training. But conditions are not ideal, and schools cannot be trusted to do this work. Teachers are not equipped for it, nor is the public ready to trust the schools in a matter so delicate and important. Almost any use of the Bible for either instruction or devotion would awaken suspicion and do injury to the school. The only practical thing under present conditions is to leave the Bible out. The entire separation of Church and State is a fundamental principle, and requires that the schools shall be kept secular and that religion in all its bearings shall be left to the home and the church.

5. A distinction must be made between different parts of the Bible. It is a collection of books written at different times and for different ends. While some parts of the Bible are of the greatest interest and value to children, there are other parts that are wholly unsuitable to bring before their minds. Many of the Old Testament stories are rich in historical and moral value, but the long genealogies, the accounts of ceremonial observances, marital secrets, and sexual sins with which these are intermingled should be omitted. It is not needful to send children to the original sources of history, and the parts of the Bible used in the instruction of children require to be edited for the purpose. The obscure prophetic writings of the Old Testament have little of school interest or value. In the New Testament there is much that cannot be used as school material. Theological controversies regarding the relation of Jesus to

God make the life of Jesus at present unavailable as a biographical study in school, while the doctrinal character of most of the Epistles renders these also unsuitable. Certain passages in the New Testament, such as the Beatitudes, the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians, and some of the Parables treated simply as stories may perhaps be used. But there should be careful discrimination not only in the ways of using Scripture in schools but in the parts which are to be used or omitted. The rich poetry that is in the Bible should be made familiar to children. The passages that have general historical, literary, and moral value should be carefully selected and freely used, and other parts of the Bible should be let alone.

6. While it is clear that the Bible must not be used in school in any sectarian spirit, yet if there *is* such a thing as an unsectarian use of the Bible, the public schools must not be deprived of this by any partisan form of legislation. Such action would itself violate the principles of free government.

In all these positions that have been summarized there is something of truth. The question is not a simple one. There are pitfalls to be avoided, and there are intellectual, moral, and spiritual advantages that may be gained by the use of some parts of the Bible for instruction, and under favorable circumstances for devotion as well.

Some light is thrown on the general problem by the conditions now confronting schools in the Philippine Islands. Shall the Bible be used in the training of these new wards of the nation? That there can be no indiscriminate or proselyting use of the Bible is obvious; but

it is equally obvious that it would be both un-American and suicidal to educational interests to attempt rigidly to bar the Bible out, or to deny its due recognition as an inspiring and spiritualizing force in American civilization.

Within a few years various books of Bible selections have been compiled on the basis of their adaptation to schools. Such books are of real value. Classified selections are also to be found, such as, *Stories for Young Children*, *Stories for Older Children*, *Connected Hebrew History*, *Selections of Poetry*, *Proverbs or Prophecy*, as well as general selections embodying moral or religious truths.

But there are other "World Bibles" from which noble passages may be selected for similar ends. The books of other religions, the literature of hymns, the writings of devout and inspired souls through all the centuries, may all furnish valuable contributions to the resources of the school for its vital work of moral and religious training.

It is fairly certain that the formal daily reading of the Bible without note or comment will never again be prescribed by law as a public-school exercise. But it is equally evident that by the principles of our national government the world's best treasures of poetry, history, and moral truth are freely at the service of the American nation in its public schools.

Amid all the complexities of this subject one fact shines out with increasing clearness. The efficiency of moral training in the schools rests finally in the hands of the teacher. Given a teacher who is wise enough, and morally and religiously earnest enough, and she can teach morals, and in some true sense religion, too, in the public schools without violating any American principle.

Rules prescribing the use of definite religious exercises will not aid her particularly; nor can rules forbidding the same prevent her from accomplishing the main important end. It is the spirit and wisdom and skill of the teacher that will determine the result, and not any outside law.

Teachers can do this work more easily, however, if the community has rational views on the subject, and if school supervisors have clear ideas as to what ought to be expected, and are willing to aid and encourage the teachers to work out the problem somewhat in accordance with their own ideas and temperaments. Some general plans of work that lend a degree of uniformity to the schools of a given city may be desirable. But within the general outline, the teacher needs large liberty of individual action.

The teachers themselves, however, need to realize their obligations in this matter, and also the conditions under which the work must be done. Teachers' training schools have a responsibility to disseminate among the teachers a knowledge of the right principles of action; and in the selection of teachers school officers should take into account fitness for this important work.

But what is the present status of American schools in this respect? Are the teachers giving effective Moral Training in the public schools?

The teachers of America as a rule are an intelligent and also a religious class. Hundreds of thousands of them are active workers in the church, the Sunday school, and in other lines of religious or philanthropic endeavor. The same spirit which they show in these other labors they take into their schoolrooms, and they are honestly trying to educate the children under their

care in body and in soul so that they may live righteously, healthfully, happily, and usefully, as good citizens of this great republic. They are not teaching sectarianism, and they know better than to do so.

They are not as a rule talking much about moral and religious teaching, and it is well that they should not talk much about it. Members of the pulpit and the press, who are doing most of the talking, are sometimes much exercised over the moral lapses in the community which apparently should have been prevented by the moral training given in the schools. But they should not fail to consider that these moral failures, though frequent and conspicuous and deplorable, do not of themselves represent the results accomplished. It is the great number of generally upright, industrious, right-minded men and women, engaged in various trades and industries, who are the chief product of the public schools; and in the words of President Roosevelt, "The average American is a pretty decent sort of fellow."

It may fairly be maintained that the public-school teachers of America in relation to their crowning work of Moral Training for American citizens are as a class as well equipped and faithful and successful as any other large body of public workers, whether in or outside of the government service, and that they may in the main be trusted for the future.

That the public schools are imperfect in this and in all other departments of their work the teachers themselves should be the first to acknowledge. The public has a right to hold the teachers to high standards of efficiency in this vital matter. Words of criticism that are sometimes heard should be of value to the schools and teachers. Some of the practical questions relating

to the subject are at present unsettled. There is still much to be learned. Discussion of these things should go on, in the pulpit, in the public press, and in gatherings of teachers everywhere. Not only the school officers and teachers, but all leaders of thought, and public-spirited men and women everywhere, should read and listen and hold intelligent opinions on the subject.

But to teachers themselves is given the supreme opportunity. There is set before them "an open door, and no man can shut it." Let them go forward courageously, with open mind and earnest spirit, willing to learn from all sources, desirous to use, yet not misuse, all right means and methods, and so carry to its highest efficiency in full accordance with our national life the great work of Moral Training in Public Schools.

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